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I. KINGS, xix, 11, 12.

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Palmam, qui Meruit, Ferat.

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LORD RAGLAN;

NOT BY "A CIRCLE OF ADMIRING FRIENDS,"

BUT BY THE UNITED VOICE AND THE UNITED HANDS OF

THE BRITISH NATION.

Preface.

If each reader of this Poem will, in his own district and amongst his own friends, support the object which its Author has in view, its purpose will be answered: inasmuch as he confidently believes that such a movement, properly organized, would meet with an enthusiastic reception. Doubtless there are some among the public press, who would gladly swell the cry in favour of a national monument to Lord Raglan; and to those, who may charge me with presumption in thus humbly bringing it forward, I would make answer, that although Tyrtæus was selected as the most unlikely guide to victory, yet success crowned his efforts; for myself, I may say that I shall be only

too glad to find the music of this Poem—if such there be—drowned in the swelling chorus of triumph, which shall raise the maligned and falsely-abused Raglan to that position, which he ought to occupy in the ranks of British heroes.

Berkswell Hall, Coventry,

March, 1857.

Palmam, qui Meruit, Ferat.

Sunlike, the God of War was sinking
  Behind the ruby-bosomed wave;
His purple features flushed with drinking
  The life-blood of the true and brave:
When, moonlike from the verge of ocean,
  Rose Peace arrayed in Mercy's form;
And hushed the din of wild commotion,
  That revelled in the battle storm.

New buds of beauty, freshly springing,
  Bedecked the red Crimean shore,
With fragrant violets sweetly fringing
  The meadows, crimson-dyed before:
Each bursting flower with joy was weeping,
  And mocked the tears that idly fall,
For those brave hearts beneath them sleeping
  No earthly spring can e'er recall.

Methought that I, in fancy dreaming,
  Lay stretched upon a cowslip bank,
And saw old England's banner streaming
  High o'er her host's embattled rank;
That there the trumpet's voice was pealing,
  Timed with the drum's inspiring beat,
And far-off village bells were stealing
  In silvery music, soft and sweet;

Methought that England's pride and beauty
  Was gathered on a seagirt plain,
That gratitude combined with duty
  To welcome to their homes again
The men, who on the bloody mountain,
  Endured the fight of Inkermann;
And stemmed the grapeshot's fiery fountain,
  That bounded from the red Redan.

Upon the dimpled breast of ocean
  The bannered fleet kept holyday;—
Wave after wave in playful motion
  Leapt up and kissed them with its spray;
Gay flags from mast and spar were gleaming
  In hues of rainbow-tinted light;
Whilst April's sun, above them beaming,
  Smiled welcome upon England's might.

Each heart, with warm excitement dancing,
  Looked forth upon its native isle
Through eyes where hope was brightly glancing,
  And longed for love's approving smile:
So bright, that when the cannon sounded
  Its peaceful summons from the shore,
Its voice was changed, and e'en the wounded
  Forgot the tones it breathed before.

And first beneath the festive arches,
  Where laurel chaplets love to twine,
With flying standard bravely marches
  The legion of the battle-line;
Hand clasped in hand, like gallant brothers,
  Devoted to a common cause,
The hero sons of hero mothers
  Bowed, grateful for the loud applause:

No jealous look was slily peering
  From envious heart or jaundiced eye;
As one they shared the hearty cheering
  That rent the sunny April sky:
Each cheek with manly joy was flushing,
  Each heart o'erflowed with honest pride,
Whilst England's maids were crimson-blushing—
  Each in her soul a soldier's bride.

In peace they passed; and then advancing
  The leaders of the host rode by
On snow-white chargers proudly prancing,—
  The flower of England's chivalry;
Who, whirlwind-like, at Balaklava
  Burst on the legions of the Czar;
And rushed, like mountain-streams of lava,
  Adown the fiery gulf of war.

What means that dark-browed tempest, lowering
  Above the gallant hero band?
When Fame her choicest gifts is showering
  Around them with unsparing hand:
What means that din of loud confusion,
  When England proudly greets them all,
And chaplet crowns in rich profusion
  From Glory's laurelled statue fall?

As erst upon the pine-clad mountain
  Discord the golden apple threw;
As by the dragon-haunted fountain
  The monster seed their brethren slew;
So now some goddess, hero-slighted,
  Has pierced them with her venomed darts;
And lurid flames, by envy lighted,
  Burn fiercely in their jealous hearts:

For each would love the minstrel's story
  Framed in his own especial praise;
Each one would wear the wreath of glory,
  Yet grudge his brother's chaplet bays;
The sword that fought the fight of duty
  Has fallen from their palsied hand,
And in the sight of love and beauty
  They wield the coward's treacherous brand.

What though the struggle waxes stronger,
  When War's red ensign is unfurled;
The bloodless conflict rages longer,
  When words on fiery words are hurled:
For when the spell of war is broken,
  The fiercest foes may friendship claim;
But rankling words, in envy spoken,
  Stir up a never-dying flame.

Yet marked I two of modest bearing,—
  Two noble specimens of man,
Of high-souled heart and matchless daring,
  Twin heroes of the red Redan:
First in the foremost rank of battle,
  Unmoved and undismayed they stood,
Amid the grapeshot's deadly rattle—
  Stout oak-trees in a storm-rocked wood.

Though rose the heap of dead and dying,
  Though deeper flowed the crimson tide,
Upon their own brave hearts relying,
  They fought in glory side by side:
In vain the foe, like bloodhounds, bounded
  Upon the gallant wolves at bay;
The ground was strewn with dead and wounded,
  Ere waned the fortune of that day.

Henceforth amongst our heroes numbered,
  With Edward of the sable crest,
With Percy's might that never slumbered,
  And royal Bruce's patriot breast;—
Upon the roll of martial story,
  With Waterloo and Inkermann,
Shine forth in lines of deathless glory
  Those heroes of the red Redan!

Far from the trumpet's joyous pealing,
  Far from the bugle's festive ring,
I saw a gentle maiden stealing,
  Whose life was in the blush of spring;
I saw her leave the crowded highways,
  That circle Glory's gilded dome;
And trip along the woodland by-ways
  In silence towards her father's home.

Then, robed in vests of azure beauty,
  Two sister spirits lightly flew,
And wreathed for her the crown of duty,
  Of lilies bathed in glistening dew:
Fair was the form of Faith, and brighter
  Were Hope's pure eyes of laughing blue;
But Charity's sweet face was whiter,
  Than falling flakes of snowy hue.

Methought I heard a soft voice singing,
  As wreathed her hands the diadem,
Where gems of diamond dew were clinging
  Around the lily's drooping stem:
"As summer winds, each flower caressing,
  Breathe forth its fragrance on the air;
So may each dying soldier's blessing
  Around thee float,—a living prayer.

"So may the teardrops, slowly falling
From eyes that mocked a tyrant's wrath,
Each pure unselfish act recalling,
Be diamonds strewn upon thy path;
E'en as in future unborn ages,
Thy token tears of sympathy
Will gleam on history's deathless pages,
The beacon lights of Charity!"

I felt my life-blood warmly glowing
(As though it had not been a dream),
To see a mother's love o'erflowing
In gratitude's unfailing stream:
She ranked no chief above his brother,
She clasped the soldier's rugged hand;—
Who would not die for such a mother?
Who would not bleed for such a land?

But through the distance dimly looming,
  Like night-clouds on a summer day
The sunlit valleys darkly glooming,
  A funeral train pursued its way;
The black-robed horses, slowly plodding,
  Crept with a noiseless muffled tread;
The sable plumes, above them nodding,
  Frowned o'er a warrior's coffined bed.

No flags, save those of death, were floating,
  No laurel crowns adorned the clay;
But dark Suspicion, fiercely gloating,
  Fed grimly on its noble prey;
What though a hero's form was lying,
  Clasped in the cold embrace of death;
Ill-featured shapes, his fame belying,
  Rode, fiendlike, upon Rumour's breath:

On! through that scene of gay ovation
  In silence passed the funeral car,
Escorting through a heartless nation
  The noblest victim of the war:
Why were not England's daughters bending
  O'er him, who once had been their pride?
Why were not England's sons attending
  The hero on his lonely ride?

Save that the princely merchant-city,
  Which borders on his sire's domain,
Wept tears of sympathising pity,
  And sent her sons to swell the train:—
Save that upon his dauntless bosom,
  True emblems of his future fame,
Lay flowerets of immortelle blossom,
  Immortal as our RAGLAN'S name!

As steal the morning rays, dispelling
  The sweet soft visions of the night,
Beam after beam, like streamlets welling
  From fountains of eternal light;—
As evening's azure beauty fleeting
  Fades in the twilight's gulf of gray;—
So from my slumbering eyes retreating,
  That dream of fancy passed away.

* * * *

Break, England, break thy heartless slumber,
  Wipe the foul plague-spot from thy fame,
Among thy proudest chieftains number
  A hero, worthy of the name:
What though his setting sun was clouded
  By mists, that paled its noonday light;
Let not his memory be shrouded
  In shadows of eternal night!

We ask no gift or rich donation
  From titled lord or crested knight;
From ALL throughout the British nation
  We claim the widow's hallowed mite;
Remember that he died heart-broken,
  Remember that he died for you;
And raise his monument in token
  Of gratitude, so justly due!

Due to that calm determination,
  That fired his heart and nerved his arm;
Due to that self-renunciation,
  That laughed at every silken charm:
Due to that sense of duty, steeling
  His soul against the wiles of sin;—
That Christian sympathy, revealing
  The pureness of the heart within.

Due to that life of heart-devotion,
  The heart that felt—the form that bled;—
Due to those tears of strong emotion,
  Wrung from his soul, though secret shed:
Due to that spirit, uncomplaining,
  Though slander stained his honoured name;
E'en when the sun of life was waning
  With Doubt's dark shadow on its fame.

Look on the warrior calmly sleeping,
  With chaplet of immortelles crowned;
Look on the stern Pelissier weeping,
  And sobbing chieftains grouped around:
Then listen to the soldiers' story,
  Those staunch co-partners of his fame;
Not Wellington in all his glory
  Won from their hearts a dearer name.

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